

# Veterans Day, Bethlehem, 2018

The Bethlehem Gadfly Fun Stuff, Gadfly's posts, Local Color November 11, 2018

You are a veteran if you spent your entire working career in the Armed Services or if the signature on your papers was barely dry.

And you are deserving of recognition today.

On November 8, 1961, 14 young Bethlehem men (including two brothers), draftees, gathered at the Salvation Army, joined three-score others from various parts of the Lehigh Valley and New Jersey, got on a bus mid-afternoon for Wilkes Barre, where they were formally inducted into the U.S. Army around 5PM, took a plane bound for Fort Jackson, South Carolina, which crashed, and by 9:30PM they were all dead.



**Albert W. Andreas, Robert S. Bedics, Barry A. Brandt, Donald F. Doyle, Thomas D. Gasda, Richard W. Jones, Joseph J. Kobli, Stephen M. Kobli, Leroy Kranch, Jr., Thomas A. Motko, Michael Placotarlis. Albert J. Rice, John D. Schuler, Charles D. Yeakel**

In all 77 died. Only 2 escaped the crash. Some Bethlehem families learned of the crash and deaths when awakened by 4AM phone calls from reporters. Most of the bodies were burned beyond recognition. It would be 3-4 days before some bodies were identified. One Bethlehem man was identified only from a school ring.

The crash triggered a national investigation of substandard transporting of military personnel. The crash was determined to be a result of shoddy maintenance, human error, and lack of emergency procedure explanations. Many could have survived.

Bethlehem took the tragedy hard. A monument was dedicated exactly seven months later, on June 8, 1962, on what was called Triangle Park or the Hub Tract, the still open space above Perkins at 3rd and Wyandotte streets. The monument was removed for a time in 1986 because of the possible sale of the property but then returned and rededicated November 8, 1986. The monument was relatively recently removed to

the Rose Garden when the property was sold to developer Jim Petrucci. The monument is located on Eighth Avenue, just a short distance from Union Boulevard.

The 14 young Bethlehem men never had a chance to wear a uniform but died for their country.



It seems to Gadfly that it is always cold in cemeteries or at monuments for the dead.

His fingers courted frostbite at 9AM this morning just in the short time he ungloved to take a few pictures. The biting wind found ways through woolen layers to find bare skin.

There were two flower arrangements, two flags. Gadfly was able to right one of the arrangements blown over by yesterday's even more biting wind.

There was one card, "In Loving Memory of Brother Donald Doyle," from his older brother Richard and Richard's wife (whose name I am sorry I couldn't make out).

A touch of warmth that helps one forget the cold.

*Gadfly plans to return to this story for the next Bethlehem Moment.*

*Thanks to Dana Grubb.*